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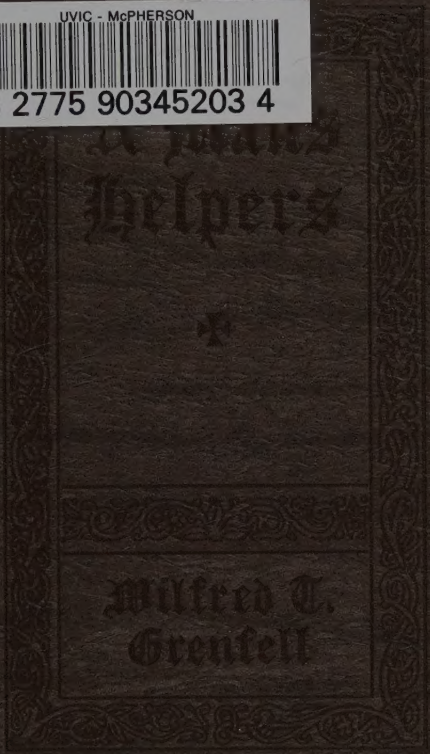

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EVERYONE HAS TO
RECOGNIZE AT TIMES
THAT HE HAS NO CLEW
TO HIS POSITION OR
TO THE DIRECTION
HE OUGHT TO GO

A MAN'S HELPERS

A MAN'S HELPERS

BY

WILFRED T. GRENFELL, M.D. (Oxon.)

Superintendent Labrador Medical Mission

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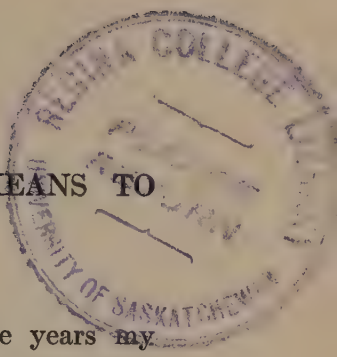
CONTENTS

	Page
I	
What the Bible Means to Me . .	9
II	
What Prayer Means to Me . . .	35
III	
What Christian Fellowship Means to Me	61

I

WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME



WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME

. . .

FOR the past twenty-five years my life has been as much that of a sailor as a surgeon. While carrying on medical missionary work with a small floating hospital vessel, I have had to be in command largely because it saved me expense. The responsibility for the safety of the ship has rested upon myself, and the navigation has often been an anxious task. My apprenticeship in this work was served in the Irish Channel, where every summer during our long vacation we hired a sloop for cruising. I was younger then, and responsibility rested lightly on my shoulders. The realization of it was not perceptibly increased by the fact that my amateur crew, if possible, knew less of the art than I did myself. We were on pleasure bent; charts were good; ports were not very far apart.

The Sailor and His Chart

But even on these fair weather cruises I can call to mind occasions on which the necessity for knowing our exact position accurately loomed up very large, where it became a matter of real importance to know at once which way to head our little craft to reach a "haven where we would be."

At these times more than intuitive knowledge was called for, and in haste we had to haul out our neglected chart and puzzle over its reliable guide marks, to take down from its forgotten place the book of coast directions and try to gain hurriedly some help from its wise counsels. The compass now became a trusty friend, and log line and lead line were unearthed from their hiding places, and called on to assist us now that we were in difficulties. All the help we needed was to be had from these if we did our share in seeking it, and on the occasions I refer to we recognized that we needed it badly enough. Consulted however suddenly, they seemed reluctant to give their best clearly to us, and

we found ourselves sincerely sorry we had not familiarized ourselves with them better while all went well with us.

Of late years, however, I have been cruising in the wider waters of the North Atlantic. Here the coast line is badly charted and the maps practically useless, though they are numerous and varied. It is almost devoid of any guiding lights, and there is not a single artificially improved anchorage. The book of directions is as out of date as the Apocrypha. Fogs frequent the coast all the year round, and as if that were not enough, a never-ending stream of Arctic ice, now in huge mountains and now in dangerous transparent level sheets, besets the whole of the seaboard. One might well be forgiven for saying — "Oh, there navigation as a science is impossible, safety is the sport of chance, success is as likely to come to the indifferent as to the worker."

Everyone — even the youngest — has to recognize at times that in these waters he has reached the limits of his own resources, and is face to face with the fact that he has no clew to his

position or to the direction he ought to go.

How many times have I walked to and fro to the small chart-room trying in vain to make the miserably inefficient chart tally with the contour of the frowning cliffs that faced me, all to no purpose. Sorrowfully I have wound up by confessing that I was literally and hopelessly at sea.

What at such times would not any wise man give for a reliable chart and sailing directions, for a great light-house with four gleaming glass windows with whose friendly rays he was familiar! In the stygian darkness of the fog and night, what would such a thing mean to any soul that wasn't dead, or who believed that the reaching of the safety of a haven beyond was largely dependent on his own action!

The Christian and His Chart

Since 1883 I have been consciously trying so to sail on the ocean of life as to keep ever heading towards that haven, which something within assures me exists beyond the bound of time and

space. God knows it has not been all calm seas and sunny skies on the voyage, there have been headwinds and fogs and ice. Yes, there have been also shoals and reefs and storms. All have had their share in forming the devious wake the years have left behind me. Think what the chart of life has meant, still means, must ever mean to me. It seems to me it must mean just the same to any man faring forth on the same venture. Its inconceivable value will only fade when I have crossed the last bar and met my pilot face to face.

An Up-to-Date Guide Book

The Bible is no mere epistle, or collection, of epigrammatic truths, no mere book of irreproachable maxims and platitudes, no mythical chronicle of marvels that occurred in a musty past. It is a living, ever up-to-date guide book, a storehouse of all necessary wisdom. It is written in the history of men's lives, who fought exactly the battles I have to fight, who faced the same difficulties, temptations and doubts

that I have to face, who tried to overcome, but were often themselves vanquished exactly as I am conscious of having tried and failed.

But it is the one storehouse of practical truths that I want, for I see that the men God loved were only the prototypes of myself, weak men like Moses made strong, fainting men like Elijah made courageous, fallen men like David raised up, a book in which saints are ever made out of sinners; a book recording an abounding love forgiving sin, a love that accepts much of every kind, soldiers and sailors, rich men and poor, wise men and foolish, traders and mechanics, preachers and poets, priests and kings — a love so abounding it finds room for a murderous, adulterous king, a poor fallen, outcast harlot; a book that shows how lepers can be cleansed and lame men made to walk, and blind men made to see, and dead men quickened into life; how this new life makes unlearned men wise and cowards brave and sordid men unselfish. It is a book of infinite hope, a book that is satisfied with faith where my knowledge can't reach, a book from

cover to cover soaked with and exuding God's abounding love to us his creatures, a book written so that all men may understand enough of it to learn to love it and find salvation in it, and yet a book so profound that it becomes more and more a veritable bottomless mine of wealth, and an unending spring of living water to him who by faith can take it for what it claims to be.

Needed, if Unwelcome, Warning

I acknowledge that the Bible often seems to rebuke me. I sometimes find it a hard master, bidding me do things that at the time I hate to do, go to places I certainly should not seek myself, and leave undone things themselves innocent and that I by no means condemn in others. The Bible seems to me to have forestalled Lord Lister, who taught that scrupulous and apparently ridiculously unnecessary precautions for cleanliness were the only safe road when human life was at stake. Asepsis is ever an apparently expensive rule to follow. But my experience has been that the Bible has not taken any un-

necessary position in calling for clean Christians as more important than orthodox ones, in calling for fidelity to a spotless Christ, in insisting on purity of heart as a prime essential for an acceptable servant, rather than on any correct intellectual apprehension.

I know this is hard. It is to me the real meaning of *Via Crucis, Via Crucis.* But I haven't a shadow of a doubt it is a further proof of the inspiration of this Book of Books.

The Authorship Question

And so it is all through. I love it more every day because I value it more as a lamp to my path and a light to my feet. Almost daily some fresh experience strengthens my conviction of its more than human wisdom. My love grows for it proportionately as I understand it better. I hope I may not be misunderstood when I confess I regard it as God speaking to me, though my head is so thick, or my heart so dull, I don't always catch his meaning. Yes, sometimes I do wake up to find some new version has left out of the Bible

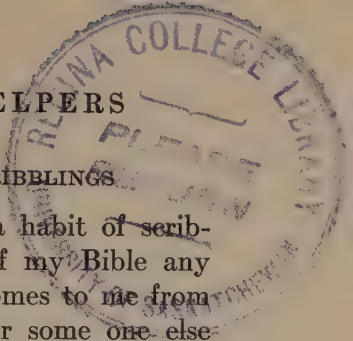
some portion I liked, as not being justified from all the various codices. It never disturbs me, for I find lots left. And even if John didn't write John, and Mark didn't write Mark, and Paul didn't write his letter to the Thessalonians, I simply take it some one else wrote it, who had God's inspirations, but who allowed, willingly or unwillingly, John, Mark, and Paul to have the credit of it through the ages.

The admiration for it comes exactly as does my admiration for the Marconi wireless installation on my little steamer; somehow from somewhere it brings news to me that I couldn't get otherwise, and I find by experience that news is always true news. Who invented wireless telegraphy, whether Clerk Maxwell or Signor Marconi, doesn't trouble me, any more than how the engine a hundred miles away spells English to me at sea through fog and dark. The only person that is likely to mind should be Marconi. I suspect Clerk Maxwell doesn't now and I know I don't.

A Matter of Affection

I own a beautiful little black spaniel, that goes everywhere I go. He is a regular little chum. He does everything but talk to me, and I can generally understand him without that. He is a real little optimist and he cheers me up a hundred times. He is a truer and more valued friend than many on two legs that I have known, and who could talk only too much. He saved my life by his intelligence when out on an ice pan when I had no other chance left me. He was just as cheerful, facing death out there with me, as when he sits up by my knee for his breakfast. All I can say is I love the little fellow.

I've often thought my Bible means all this to me — with the further advantage of its being able to speak to me, of always being wise in its speech, and never leaving me sorry it had spoken. I can't understand all it says at the time, so I just go on trusting it as I do my spaniel, till it becomes plain.



Notes and Scribblings

I have always had a habit of scribbling on the margin of my Bible any helpful thought that comes to me from it as I read it, or hear some one else expound it. I love a Bible reading ten times better than any sermon, and always did. I've tramped many miles to hear Joseph Parker's Sunday morning Bible talk. The editor of the *People's Bible* had always something to say to the people. I wouldn't ride in trolleys on Sundays, but I was glad to walk a few miles for what he gave me. Writing in one's Bible feels like answering it. It seems to me to be keeping up a conversation. One's notes are often trivial and sometimes one feels ashamed of them on looking back after a lapse of time. But as a particular copy gets filled up and illegible, it is easy to purchase a new one. In these days even soft covered pocket editions are cheap.

I have no sentiment about one old copy, and the markings themselves generally are so far from satisfying me

the next time I come to the same passage, that I am glad to have a clean page so as to get an open field for thought. I still have a sort of dislike to reading my Bible in railway trains, and especially when one is waiting for meals to be served in public places, where one has no one to speak to and nothing else to fill his mind, though I prefer the Bible then as a thought suggester to any daily paper I ever saw.

The reason that one doesn't like to produce one's Bible in these odd minutes is because he hates to be thought to be posing as "unco' guid." Some day I shall hope to have my pocket Bible bound like my Oxford book of verse in a cover that is not distinctively religious, and in a form that is not conventional; in fact, such an edition as I should choose for any other of my favorite companion books. The *Twentieth Century Bible* or *Modern Reader's Bible* on India paper and in a yellow cover would be more to my mind. I presume the reason that the same passages start new trains of thought on returning to

them is because it is a new man they are talking to. Anyhow, wonderful as it sounds, it certainly is true.

The Wisdom of the Word

Nothing strikes me, however, as so wonderful about the Bible as its wisdom. Never book spake like this book. It gives me thoughts that never entered my head otherwise, and never on any occasion have I regretted its conversation afterwards. I always find myself astonished that a lot of people of such ordinary rank in life gave birth to it. Personally I have never had time to devote to studying the text in Greek or Latin or Hebrew, nor do I read Sanskrit or cuneiform languages or inscriptions on monoliths. There never seems any need for me to do so. If all the scholars of past and present years haven't yet arrived at what the original meant sufficiently to put it into the vulgar English tongue, it would be simply presumption on my part to endeavor to help them. I found it quite enough to translate the old English of two and a half centuries ago into

the twentieth century vernacular, till these new versions came to my aid. I never have had any bias towards devoting time to the study of musty manuscripts, as some men have.

A Responsive Book

I do not read my Bible for the English of it. All I care about is understanding it. I have lost all interest at times in trying to read it, for I found so many places where the King James translation conveyed no meaning to me. Even if the English were verbally or otherwise inspired, what use was that if I didn't understand it? It isn't a kind of charm, the mere recital of which wards off evil, nor can it be conferring a favor upon God to read and listen to what he says, nor does it leave him under an obligation. It does bring me nearer to him when I understand it, for it is a storehouse of rich treasures of wisdom into which I may delve. I do that, however, asking him to give me just what he sees I need each time I go to it, and I do not look on it as an enlarged armory into which I may go

to get some fresh weapon to score my enemy and perpetuate strife.

It seems to me you get out of it pretty well what you are in search of, and I've met men who have come from it bristling like hedgehogs or sea urchins, so as to be mighty undesirable companions. I think if I couldn't come away from reading my Bible more peaceful and more forgiving and more contented with the world, I wouldn't worry it as often as I do now, anyhow.

The reason the average man doesn't read his Bible is because he doesn't want to. It isn't from principle or conviction he neglects it. Put it in a form in which it interests him; add, if you like, the discipline of becoming familiar with it as a boy, and so acquiring a taste for it; be sure he has a real understanding of its exquisite, simple stories, and he won't fail to return to it sometime.

As for compelling boys to promise to read so much of it every day, I have no use for that. That is the way I was induced to take cod liver oil, but never learnt to like it. Moreover, it was a

horrible temptation to say you had taken it, when perhaps you had only taken it to the fire or the sink. I know there was a tendency to make boys either unnatural or unveracious by that method. Yet I also know the Bible *can* be made interesting, whether to one ten years old or twenty.

To me the book is a gospel, or good news, and only as such do I value it. When one thinks of the millions who spend hours a week reading newspapers, the majority of which are crowded with useless, harmful, or incorrect items, it seems not so "old maidish" as some might consider it to read one's Bible more, and save sluicing one's cerebral gray matter with a stream that is not calculated to evolve its capacity for right thinking or steady up its equilibrium.

The Puzzlesome Portions

Being always fond of puzzles and problem solving, I can take some short portion of the Bible and enjoy thinking over its meaning for me at odd moments of the day. If I find a solution, I take good care to write it in my copy, and

later to hand the idea on to some one I think it will help. I never yet had a man think this was talking cant, and they are generally grateful for the thought.

Helps to Understanding it

I first learned to study my Bible from D. L. Moody's writings. He wrote a tract called "How to Study the Bible," and any one just beginning to look for help to the old chart of life could do much worse than commence with this little help from that eminently practical, human Christian man. One can strike in on the first page, without trouble or expense. A word concordance and an English dictionary are the next most useful helps in my opinion. Of all the commentaries none to my mind approaches Matthew Henry's. I fully endorse Charles Spurgeon's remark, that any Bible student who has not got that book should sell his coat and buy it. I think to study the Bible for addresses, and so forth, is a fatal mistake. Study it for yourself as a guide to avoid shoals and rocks, as a key to open the door to the

real pathway of life. A friend of mine, who went to Uganda as a missionary, told me for this reason he found the silent years while he was learning the language just invaluable. As for public reading of the Bible, we have an informal way at our fishermen's services of commenting on the text as we read it, having of course sought for wisdom to understand it ourselves beforehand. I should hate to get up and read in public a message from God that I didn't understand or hadn't first tried to understand. How could I make any one else do so otherwise? Take for instance Isaiah, Chap. ix, and read that aloud in the authorized version without comment. To me it is a stultifying proceeding, as it conveys no meaning. If one were ordered to monotone or read the couplet about the "slithy toves" from *Alice in Wonderland*, which is also meaningless as it stands, one would blankly refuse.

The Art of Explanation

Christ loved to explain it, Philip did the same, and he was a wonderfully

successful Christian. Paul used to explain the Scriptures. The explanation seemed especially to be the Christian disciples' specialty. They had the Scriptures before, but the men on the road to Emmaus, the eunuch in the chariot, the Jews in Asia, simply needed the explanation. The only drawback to the Scripture having been written so long ago is that it is constantly necessary to convert it into the vernacular. What is this but trying to make "every man to hear God's word speak in his own language." Surely this is still a gift of the Holy Spirit to-day, whether we seek to hear God's voice in it ourselves, or make it audible to others. There is more pathos perhaps than we are apt to think at first in the old yarn about the woman who, after hearing the Bible read, could only remember the "blessed word Mesopotamia."

It is always a great privilege to me to be asked to "read the Scripture" in public, and even portions that mean little to me I have known to be a great source of joy to hearers whose needs I did not know. The hush that marks

an intelligent reading, the sitting up of the audience, the silence in which the proverbial pin could be heard to drop, shows incontrovertibly how the Bible will still hold an audience when it gets fair treatment. Yet how often have we all waked up at the "Here endeth the Scripture" without the least idea whether it was Old or New Testament that had been droned out to us.

Sensible and Rational

To me the Bible is a sensible and rational book. Whether it agrees or appears to agree with the science of the day does not concern me. I have no fear but that science will find out the truth some day about it, without my losing time trying to help her out in that direction. If she advances as rapidly in the matter as she does in healing men's bodies, in her conquest of other difficulties, she will come to the truth in due time, I know. The Bible reader of to-day seems to me already to be understanding it better and loving it more, judging by the methods men are adopting all the

world over to carry out its biddings. The infallible interpretation of the Bible, that was considered so infallibly infallible in the middle ages, certainly interpreted by the actions that resulted therefrom, suggest to me that it would be better for the twentieth century church of God if the leaders of the sects claimed a little less infallibility than even they now do. Here perhaps science would own up, also, that everything is not yet revealed nor the last word spoken yet.

Not Necessary to Explain All

The question here discussed is, "What does the Bible Mean to Me?" When first converted, my friends and acquaintances often asked me, "How about Cain's wife?" "Did the whale swallow Jonah?" and so on. I can only answer still, "My dear fellow, I give it up." When they replied, "Surely, then, you don't believe it," I could only say, "I can't explain it," or say, "It isn't explainable." I can't explain ten thousand things, the wireless telegram, the course of cancer, the energy of radium, why

sleep may confidently be indulged in. I don't think what comes after death is a very pressing matter after all. By disclaiming superior knowledge I was generally permitted to go my way and retain their affections quite as well as if I had embarked on voluble and specious explanations After all, there must be some limits to the labors of a surgeon, having so many functions to give attention to as I have.

Is it a very terrible confession that I have reserved for the end, that I, a Christian missionary all my life, am still in exactly the same position as I was with regard to many of the questions that my more theologically-minded fellow-workers are so much better informed upon? Is it a still further lapse from virtue and confession of lack of qualification to serve the Christ, if I own that these matters do not worry me one iota, however my candid, cock-sure critics often try to do so.

A Priceless Thing

I love the Bible. I believe it contains all necessary truth about the way

a man should walk here below. I am glad there are still some puzzles left in it for me and for those that come after me. The milk I find in it nourishes me. There is no doubt meat I can't digest, that those with different viscera than mine are already assimilating. This I must rest content with, I presume. Every young man, I think, ought not to expect to be so infallible as to understand the whole of it. That may explain some not prizing it highly enough. To me it means everything. Take it away and you can have all else I possess.

II

WHAT PRAYER MEANS TO ME

WHAT PRAYER MEANS TO ME

PRAYER to me means speaking to my Father in Heaven, who yet somehow lives on earth enough to hear me, and not only knows what I want, but also what I really need, or what is best for me, and, moreover, who is sure to give it to me.

I approach him exactly as any one else to whom I would take a petition, and I address him as my common sense suggests, in perfect confidence that that is the way he would wish me to treat him. I credit him with knowing how much I want a thing, and whether I am willing to do all in my own power to obtain it. That is, I consider he will look to me, as it were, to be willing to pay the price. I never expect him to do my share.

Not for Our Much Speaking

I do not, therefore, feel it incumbent, or even respectful on my part, to be asking him for heaps of things I care

nothing about, and I do not consider he would approve of my repeating empty words, or words that mean in reality nothing to me, and calling that prayer, and patting myself on the back, metaphorically, for going through the process. Nor do I consider I am putting my Maker under any particular obligation to me in any way simply because I devote time morning and evening to talking to him for the sake of talking. Such practices never seemed to me to have any right to be called devotion, or devotions.

I don't believe I can in prayer convey any information on general topics to the Almighty, and I don't consider that when praying to him in public I am called on to convey information to any one else. There is left, then, the giving of thanks to him for his goodness, and that I class as praise, and do it very briefly in prayer, considering song a more suitable medium to express it. And there is also confession of my own shortcomings.

Here again I find little comfort in, and little use for, the confession of

things in general. I am accustomed to spend more time in searching my own heart and life for the real causes of my failures, while walking along the street or pacing the deck, than on my knees. I have been taught to believe in the habit of prayer, but I believe it is more respectful to go to sleep prayerless than to go to sleep on your knees. I have more often made a big effort to keep awake to pray on my knees when I have been in company, camping, or in cabins of strange vessels, than I have when in my own, for the simple reason that I don't like to be misunderstood, and merely kneeling down is certainly a good declaration that you acknowledge your sonship of God. I have seen more than once one man after another through a hunting camp kneel down and "say their prayers" just because I did; and I have thought I noticed that that simple act made a big difference in our relationship afterwards, forming a bond of union, as we all recognized our common mortality.

From this it is obvious that, except on extraordinary occasions, the actual

time devoted to "saying prayers" has not been excessive in my case, and thus prayer has never been tedious to me, or a weariness to which I thought it necessary to accustom my flesh. I have never considered it as important as reading the Bible and trying to catch its meaning for the day, or for some problem I am face to face with, or for my general life. I find greater pleasure, because I think I hear through its pages God talking to me. I have, therefore, cultivated that habit much more, and I see no reason to regret it.

It is always a great grief to me that in the Church of which I am a member the Bible is read so unintelligently, so mechanically, and without any comment, and still in a version, the old English, which makes the sense almost impossible to catch, and of which the translation is so poor that over and over again the point is lost, as in the first lesson for Christmas morning, Isaiah ix, 1–8. I am vandal and utilitarian enough to believe that the same translated into newspaper English would be provocative of much more good.

I was speaking once to a man who had been bringing up a young Jewish lad with his family. The boy had consistently expressed a wish to become a preacher. One day, however, an explanation was given of what prayer meant, and of the privilege it was. The boy soon after came and said, "I shan't be a preacher now, Dad." "Why not?" said my friend. "Because I cannot find beautiful enough words to speak to God in."

Though this sentiment seems a truer one than that which animates in public prayer the familiarity of some men with their Creator, I confess that to me the most beautiful language is the most simple and the most intelligible; in English it is practically monosyllabic. The aspirations of the human heart can never to my mind be expressed in words more beautiful and more reverent for public or congregational use than those in the familiar hymns, shown by a plebiscite taken some years ago in England to be the most popular in the English language. Almost all of these are monosyllabic:

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Just as I am, without one plea."

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

and so on. These to my mind have no peers among prayers in verse, and the simple Lord's prayer, "Our Father which art in Heaven," no peer among prayers in prose. Simplicity is always the measure of the love I have for verbiage anyhow, and "God have mercy on me a sinner" suits my idea of prayer much better than all the exuberant verbosity with which some think it is necessary to clothe their petitions.

Form versus Spirit

Thus the bent of my mind has never permitted me to believe that the beauty of expression has anything whatever to do with commending a prayer to God, or to an earnest soul in distress. In fact, the eloquence of the setting tends to distract my mind from the real object. In the prayer of petition, when your whole soul is eagerly set on getting an answer, you have little inclination

to bother with words; while in the prayer of confession it seems impertinent to try to mitigate the horror of it by such shallow things. I never forget hearing a prayer characterized as "the most beautiful prayer ever addressed even to a Boston audience." Plain "God have mercy" sounds so genuine a cry of distress, it comes like a voice calling for help out of the darkness, and awakens naturally in one's own mind a desire to help at once without any reference to the way the cry is worded.

The fact is, when a real cry for help or mercy comes, one doesn't think a second of the form of it, it is the tone that tells you of the genuineness of him who makes it. Or when a man or boy comes to me convicted of having done me wrong, and desires forgiveness, the more brokenly and humbly the story is told, the more quickly will my own unforgiving heart be convinced of the value of it, and the more readily and eagerly desire to extend the prerogative of mercy. A stilted phraseology would be so absolutely out of place as to be

ludicrous. The same cry or confession, evidently carefully set in the politest language of the best society, or in the choicest expressions of the most correct literature, would only divert my mind from the actual petition.

Long prayers have always been unsuited to my temperament. The longer they are the harder I have always found it to derive anything of value from them. As a boy I was accustomed, and well able, to sleep as peacefully through the various groups of prayers at the services I had to attend, and yet wake exactly as the rest rose from their knees, as I have known some men able to take exactly forty winks after dinner and no more. I shall carry to my grave gratitude to D. L. Moody, who led me to stay and listen to his message by calling on his audience to sing a hymn while a long-winded brother should finish his prayer, the duration of which was actually at that moment driving me out of the building. In short, it seems to me that the more keenly I want a thing the briefer my form of petition, and the more directly I come to the point.

Repetition of the prayer seems to me both scriptural and natural. We should do the same so long as there was any hope even if the petition was being made to an earthly father.

Such crises in life as kept Jacob or the Master praying all night have either never been mine, or I have been too dull of soul to perceive them. Yet I have seen physical danger in many forms. The wakefulness of those haunted by fear of approaching trouble, or by the remorse for past errors, is, I think, rather physical than spiritual. Excitement and instability that accompanies trouble and worry is not cured by lengthy prayers, so much as by the consciousness of no fault of our own, and of God's face not being turned away. If due to our own folly, it is not to be cured by formal supplications, but by making amends as soon as we can.

My Prayer on the Ice

In physical danger there is no question that Nehemiah's instantaneous, wordless prayer is sufficient. I know my prayer, when adrift in the Atlantic

on a pan of ice, and when I never for one moment anticipated living through the night, was no longer than usual. I slept peacefully until the moon rose at midnight, and then again till just before one o'clock, when a scheme to make a flag-pole out of my dog's legs crossed my mind and occupied my time. If my mind did repeat a special petition at all, it was in the monosyllabic language of an old hymn that kept running through my head:

> "My God and Father, while I stray
> Far from my Home on life's rough way,
> Oh, teach me from my heart to say,
> Thy will be done."

No doubt this same bent of mind has always given me a horror of acting as if prayer was locking oneself up and asking God to do what you could and ought to do yourself. The awful ghastliness of a picture like "The Novice," in which I presume some would call the act the monks are engaged in, "prayer," to my mind can't be excelled by the most horrible picture of a bloody battle-field. There is a nobility about men who do almost anything, a con-

solation even in death in battle, that capacities and life have at least not been allowed to atrophy for want of use. But that a life should be entirely devoted to talking and repetition of words, while capacities for practical usefulness are sinfully wasted, is to me more than unspeakably sad, such a life as that seems to me most undeniably lost.

Not a Substitute for Work

So far is anything of that kind from my idea of prayer, that I can only see that it involves the position of a parasite on humanity, combined with an attempt to repeat the offence and become a parasite on the Creator and Giver of our talents as well. Moreover, it parades before the world's workers a view of prayer that alienates their sympathy from any prayer at all. I can see prayer in a man buying a spade, and digging his land, and planting his potatoes, but I can't see any in a man sitting in a house and chanting forms of words that potatoes may be forthcoming, while all the time he expects to ask another to find them for him free.

It seems like asking God to feed him, while he does nothing. I can see prayer in a man going to college and spending time and money and energy in learning all he can about the body God has given to him and the truths revealed to men of life-long devotion to their work, like Lister, Pasteur, and Simpson. I can't see any prayer in not making any of these efforts, but sitting at home and asking God to relieve one of everything but talking.

I do not underrate the value of prayer, or the injunction to pray. But God revealed antiseptics to Lister as the result of his labor and courage, and anesthetics to Morton and Simpson in return for venturing even their lives to discover some escape from the agonies of humanity, and all kinds of knowledge to other indefatigable workers who have given us such things as anti-toxins and vaccines and swept out innumerable diseases. Men suffered untold agonies from which they just as sincerely prayed for deliverance long before the days of ether and chloroform. Yet a man operated on for the removal

of stone felt the knife even if he had strength given him to bear the pain.

How in the face of these facts of life can I believe that in return for mere words of lazy wishes of idle folk, God will stultify the patient self-sacrificing efforts that have wrested such great results for his children? I have no faith in prayer when we are not doing our share. When we are trying, or have tried and failed, when we are at our wit's end, I fully believe in crying to God in our trouble. If there is any error with regard to length, to which I always feel that I with most men must plead guilty, it is only in regard to our insufficiently expressing our gratitude to God for his goodness and his loving kindness to the children of men.

Wordless Prayers

My view of prayer seems to be fundamentally different from that of many others, for I never have considered it actually necessary to find any words at all in which to clothe my petitions. I have lived a life so irregular, so

wandering and so physically exacting, that I have been unable in any way to follow the example of most men and lay aside certain fixed times and seasons for prayer at all. A doctor's life involves irregular day and night work, a sailor's life, as master of a ship, does the same, a traveling lecturer's even more so. Thus I have never settled down in a home of my own, and therefore it may be that my attitude to prayer is necessarily unusual and unconventional.

Just as no fixed time has been possible, so no fixed forms of words have seemed either suitable or attractive. The attractive pattern of prayer to me has never been the meditative and introspective. This may be because I have been too occupied and my time too cut up, so that I have never acquired the capacity for enjoying long prayer services. And though I have on many, many occasions attended matins and evensong, and the less formal but not less lengthy prayer meetings, I have gone and stayed and come away, often enough only in a resentful mood that in a short day so much time should be

called for to inform my Father of what he knows perfectly well already, simply to show that I recognize my dependence on him.

No, my ideal of prayer has been rather ejaculatory than that of the synagogues.

There are times when I have keenly felt the need of fellowship in prayer. These have been special occasions of sorrow, anxiety, joy, or sympathy. But though I have always felt glad of the sense of self discipline that attending a special prayer service calls for during the routine of life, when so many other demands on one's time exist, yet I may as well own that the best means to acquire an end is the doing all I can myself; meanwhile, I am not unmindful of my Father's interest and ability alone to give me success.

Every revelation of science and every mastery of nature given of God seems to me to be a direct call to man to do more or, if you like, an increased privilege to be able to be more himself, thus permitting him to share more and more the attributes of his Father. Five

hundred years ago he just had to leave to God the safe-guarding of every simple septic wound because he knew not how to treat it; every outbreak of epidemic scourges, because he knew not how to avert it; every journey by land and every voyage by sea, because the known methods were so slow and so dangerous.

Here lies my resentment to specious prayers, or thoughtless prayers, or idle and lazy prayers, that almost make it a virtue to despise our Father's generous sharing of his powers and wisdom with us, neglecting thus his best means for the evolution and real uplift of ourselves; and, instead, in credulous and often conceited and self-satisfied vacuity, considering ourselves superior for the very fact that we neglect our own chances and capacities, while we pretend to be more loving children of his.

Meanwhile, we lose the only true joys of which we are humanly capable, namely, the joy of creating things, or doing things ourselves. To me this is the one foretaste of the joy of heaven, a sharing of the real joy of God our Father, the great Creator. On the

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other hand, that this attitude toward prayer has persisted in my life I cannot entirely attribute to environment, for the people among whom I live have almost exactly the opposite tendency. Our seamen pray aloud as a rule, not only in public, but in private also. I have been lulled to sleep many a time to the sound of a comrade pouring out aloud his petition to God as he knelt by the settle. This habit makes it easy for our people to speak naturally to God in their prayer meetings, where there is a very noticeable and characteristic absence of self-consciousness.

From the German Ocean to North Labrador one realizes this same feature, how naturally, simply, and earnestly these men pray. When they pray at all they mean every word of it. I have known more than one man, naturally antagonistic to all emotional or demonstrative forms of worship, so moved by these simple men's conversations with a very obviously personally present God, that unbidden tears have flowed over unaccustomed cheeks, and the

attitude permanently altered towards the meaning of prayer.

Dr. Worcester and His Guide

When deeply in earnest about some part of their own daily employment, it is a sailor's custom to emphasize his diction rather by the loudness of his voice than by the multiplication of words, or special selection of language. This, too, is very noticeable in their prayers. The majority of praying men get louder and louder as they proceed with their prayer, and eventually shout at the very top of their voices, so that one can even tell before entering the meeting where the crew hail from by the intensity of their petitions. Dr. Worcester tells of a very characteristic instance of the necessity these men feel to clothe their petitions with words. He was far away in the wilds of North Newfoundland, alone with a guide who to him was a stranger. It suddenly occurred to Dr. Worcester that the man was a giant in strength and obviously poor enough in circumstances to make the acquisition of a kit like his own very,

very desirable. After lights were out and darkness reigned complete, Dr. Worcester was stunned to hear some one cautiously moving around outside his tent. Crawling to the entrance and raising the flap, he was able to make out the figure of his guide, which, as he watched him, disappeared behind a bush. To his no small alarm he soon heard a conversation being carried on. There could be no one in these woods but some companion of the guide's. There was no time to be lost. Seizing his revolver he crept out to watch what would develop. Almost immediately the figure of the guide loomed into view against the light of the last embers of the camp fire. He was kneeling on the ground, his hands lifted up in petition to God, to whom he was pouring out his soul in prayer, exactly as if carrying on a conversation with a friend alongside him.

This aspect of man's side of prayer has been forever endorsed by Jesus Christ's own attitude to prayer on the hills of Galilee and in the garden of Gethsemane. The beauty and power

and value of it has been burnt deep into my own soul by twenty years of life among men I love, to whom this expression of prayer appeals most and yields the largest results. Still, I can only judge of my own mental attitude to prayer by the way I find myself led to act concerning it. While I realize more and more fully as the years go by the need and the privilege of communion with my Father in Heaven, I still am content if these opportunities for special times allotted to the act of putting my desires into words are not as frequent as I understand many fellow-workers for the Christ consider essential for their own spiritual life.

Differences in Temperament

To me it seems God will lead each of his children in this matter as in all others, if we will simply put it in his hands, and that it is within our power to do very great harm, and discourage and deter others not similarly constituted, if we in any way arrogate to ourselves the position of judge of what they ought or ought not to do. I say

this because, before I was a Christian, I dreaded the position assumed to be the only possible one for Christians, namely, that they must give hours and hours not to prayer but to "prayers" — a very different matter. I felt I never could do it. And the infliction of that as a necessary exercise for all who should dare to confess themselves followers of Christ, seemed to me to be the imposition of a burden intolerable to bear. Ever since, during the special services in which long intervals occur, as in our own communion service, I still am unable to occupy the long recurrent periods of silent prayer as many of those around me appear to be able to do.

When the first disciples found that the philanthropic tasks incumbent on Christ's followers occupied so much time and thought that there was a real danger of there being no one at all to devote his time specially to speaking to God, they divided the Church up into two classes. One should under God regard it as their main task to interpret the message to the world by

practical acts of kindness; the other the Apostles dignified for all time by assuming those duties themselves, saying, "We will give ourselves to prayer and preaching, while you look after tables." Some Christians I think, of whom I believe I am one, are more fitted of God, and therefore more consciously blessed, in the serving of tables than in the devotional exercises in which others find their closest walk with God.

The Gist of the Matter

To sum up: The privilege of prayer to me is one of my most cherished possessions, because faith and experience alike convince me that God himself sees and answers, and his answers I never venture to criticize. It is only my part to ask. It is entirely his to give or withhold, as he knows is best. If it were otherwise, I would not dare to pray at all.

In the quiet of home, in the heat of life and strife, in the face of death, the privilege of speech with God is inestimable. I value it more because it calls for nothing that the wayfaring man,

though a fool, cannot give — that is, the simplest expression to his simplest desire. When I can neither see, nor hear, nor speak, still I can pray so that God can hear. When I finally pass through the valley of the shadow of death I expect to pass through it in conversation with him.

III

WHAT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP MEANS TO ME

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. . .

(WRITTEN AT SEA)

ODDLY enough, as I take my pen to write "What Christian Fellowship Means to Me," my vessel is passing a small island lying far off shore in the Atlantic. It is early January, and the bare low rocks are coated with white like a sugared cake. Wherever the heavy breakers have been rushing over the cliff-faces immense masses of most exquisitely shining ice-crystals cling in fantastic festoons. On this island is one solitary house, from which a large blue flag is fluttering on a long stick, giving us a dumb greeting as we pass. For we are the only neighbors this solitary family will see for many days and even weeks, and we are but as a ship passing in the night.

Formerly quite a number of houses were on the island, the nearness to

the fishery ground, the fact that the seal herds skirted the island, and the love of the innumerable sea birds for its well-weeded ledges, having attracted men to live there. But the loneliness of the long winters, when the island is for months shut off from the land, spurred them to tear down their homes and like snails carry them on their backs to the nearest part of the mainland that offered a harbor for their craft.

My Hermit Friend

My friend who still clings to the solitude of his island has had to see his young folks also leave him. Yet if you could land and spend an hour with the old couple, you would find a happy and most hospitable home, and you could only arrive at the conclusion, if you were tempted to moralize, that the fellowship of one's kind is not in every case essential.

In forming an estimate of the value of friendship from our own experience we are apt to forget that this idiosyncrasy is a fact, and if so we may be led into judging unjustly. There, however,

you would have to stop. For so long as we human beings are limited by our many finalities, it is undeniable that the association with our fellows is desirable.

So far as work goes, I know of no man who with his own hand has killed more codfish, seals, and birds than my hermit friend of the island. He has thus been able to rear a fine family. He has never known what it was to want any of the necessities of life. He has been always able to meet his bills, and to afford hospitality to all strangers. His animal life has been a success in his small sphere. Knowing, however, his great capacities, one has a feeling that had he been associated with other men he could have done better, even in the tasks to which he devoted his time, and that he might have had a more abundant life. He certainly could have led other men, and the capacity of a life in things physical is increased directly in proportion to the exercise of this faculty. Whether mere increased material accumulation would have really added to his life value is, however, an open question. He certainly is not of a creative

nature, and except that he could have imparted more to his employees or associates of what he had himself been taught, humanity as a whole would probably have gained or lost little. But a multiplication of these "littles" makes much, and so I look at the solitary house on the island with a tinge of sorrow, seeing that it typifies, alas, the attitude of many towards the higher responsibilities of life.

My Gentleman Friend

It is more or less easy to understand the solitary alcoholic drinker, as he has a secret he desires to hide. But among my acquaintances is one, a scholarly and distinguished gentleman of ease. He is married and has a charming wife and children, grown beyond the age when it might be natural to seek temporary respite from their company. Yet he prefers to take his pleasures alone, his "best vacations" being when he goes off into the wilds entirely by himself. Alone, near nature, is his ideal of pleasure. Another friend, possessed of a yacht, horses, automobiles,

every pleasure-giving possibility, practically takes all his recreations alone. In these cases, while one again recognizes the idiosyncrasy as a fact, the only difference seems that there is an unconsciousness of anything that should be hid. For real human pleasure, so far as it is more than animal, must reach its climax only in the contribution it makes to the happiness of others. The solitary drinker damns his body. It seems to me the other no less does despite to his soul. In pleasure as well as in work, our best can only be obtained through fellowship.

The Comradeship of Humble People

The people among whom my lot has been cast are poor and isolated. Their life is largely physical and their opportunities for association few. They are not blessed with the gift of thoughts and conversation arising from contact with other men's minds through books. They live so near to the necessity-line that they have really not been able to acquire the habit of inviting people to meet them socially at great dinners and

suppers. In the company of those from wealthier social circles they are very apt to appear a silent people. In spite of this, it is a fact that where possessions are few, fellowship is more spontaneous and more universal, and this the habits of our people exemplify. For though the conversation may not be pregnant with new truths and terse with epigram, it is free, hearty, and for absence from unkindnesses it also compares well with much one hears in drawing-rooms; while the hospitality, if unpremeditated, is less discriminating and always sincere.

I have myself arrived in the middle of a winter night with a hungry team of dogs at the tiny cottage of a stranger, who was in bed with his wife. Yet his greeting was more than genial. While he fed our dogs in the dark on the snow, his good wife fed us. And when it was time to retire to rest, the bed they themselves commenced the night in had been refurnished for us, while they, for the lack of a second, slept on the floor of the loft. There is not only this superabundant bonhomie among our poor people, which ever makes their water

wine, but the same fellowship in service is a more than beautiful characteristic. Thus Jim's house wants moving, so all hands are "invited" next Wednesday to do it. They come and do it. Jack's schooner wants hauling up, and every man in the harbor will be on time quite freely to lend a hand. My two motor boats want dragging half a mile over the harbor ice for launching. At the hour named every man and boy in the harbor are handy at the time, and most of the women as well.

Here no one would dream of asking a doctor to pay for being carried to a sick man, or a parson on his rounds. When on one occasion my feet had been incapacitated by frost-burn and some of my dogs lost, every team from north and south went at their own invitation and hauled the balance of my logs home for me. This fellowship of love is an oil for the wheels of life that we are apt to find short-stocked in more highly civilized centers. But it is a jewel that nothing can replace. Possibly the sense of a need of help, of dependence on something beyond ourselves, emphasizes

this trait in poorer people and especially in sailors. And so it proves one of God's best compensations, this spur to fellowship.

An Educative Force

Fellowship is a need of human nature. Its value is inestimable. A primal lesson to every school child should be to trust to and count on the help of others, and to be himself loyal. The esprit de corps of a school has proved a lever to raise and a prop to support many a weakling. The pride of family, the camaraderie of occupation, the responsibility for dependent ones, quite as surely as the reliability of trusted ones, have nerved cowards, sustained the failing, and crowned victors that must otherwise have been among the vanquished.

Here, too, the unselfishness of fellowship must be taught. In scholarship, as in games, he who fights solely for his own hand soon becomes isolated from his fellows, and is despised even for his very powers. Team play is the really valuable lesson that compensates for the modern game, and team play is the

great lesson of life — each man learning to know, and to act, on the maxim that no one liveth to himself. A good player will, as I have seen more than one do, pass the ball to a comrade, who is sure to score, right in front of goal, when it meant the certain loss of his chance of handing his own name down to posterity as having scored the winning point himself. His share in the transaction will be shortly forgotten, possibly will never really be recognized. But honor will come to his college, his university, his alma mater, to something bigger and more enduring than his own poor life.

"One more charge and then be dumb,
When the forts of folly fall,
May the victors when they come
Find my body near the wall."

Only when the spirit of responsibility to our fellows animates us can we really be said to be "playing the game." The realization of the value of fellowship seems to come very near revealing to us the message Christ came to teach — God's Fatherhood, our Brotherhood. I once saw the guests collecting for the annual gathering of the "Light Brigade"

that rode hand in hand to almost certain death at Balaclava. To some it was a pathetic sight, the gray heads and the bent forms of the few survivors. To me it was a wondrous, lovely sight, this enduring sense of fellowship, born of a common act of heroism and devotion. What will not a man do for an old chum? What pleasures do not the foregathering of old friends forebode? It seems to show how divine a thing this consciousness of brotherhood is; surely it is prophetic of the more lasting fellowship that we look for at the gates of life eternal.

So in our spiritual lives, which to be spiritual and live at all must of their very nature be separated by indelible distinctions from what is carnal and dead, the need for fellowship reigns supreme.

The Influence of Example

When as a young man I for the first time heard a speaker call for those who were not ashamed to be called followers of Christ to stand up, I sat glued to my seat. I had made but recently the

great decision of my life, that I would accept faith in Jesus Christ, and would try to follow it to its ultimate issue. I would have stood up gladly to make one for a forlorn hope. Lieutenant Hobson's willingness to blow himself up for his country at the entrance of Santiago harbor never seemed anything unusual to me. General Gordon's readiness to go and die if necessary for the Soudan seemed to me to be simply the climax of opportunity of a soldier's life.

But in the presence of my college comrades to stand up and say I was willing to follow Christ, knowing how vague was my vision of what that could involve, was more than I could do. Suddenly from a long row of sailor boys, all dressed alike in the uniform of the naval training ship, one boy stood up. The fellowship of pluck, of what seemed to me real courage, was exactly what I needed. My chains were broken and I got up, a step I never can be sufficiently grateful for, no, not to my dying day. I never knew more of the boy himself. I don't consider that sentimental fellowship is an essential. We neither spoke,

nor shook hands, nor wept on one another's necks. We just passed in the night. But the fellowship of the boy's courage had meant everything to me.

We had been playing a big foreign football match on one occasion a year or so later. In those days dressing accommodation for players was chiefly remarkable for its puritan simplicity. The victorious team was scrubbing itself and changing its flannels in the spacious dancing hall of a not altogether too irreproachable saloon. An uproarious gang of the sporty fraternity had crowded the available space that they might be seen with the heroes. Their habits of imbibing alcohol, of fouling the atmosphere with bad smoke, low conversation and songs, being the custom of the time, passed quite unnoticed.

Suddenly there was a hush. Our captain was standing on a table with nothing but his knickers on, his physique itself a sermon to the animated clothes pegs that filled the room. "Gentlemen, the person on the stand here," he said quite quietly, "has commenced a parody

on the Bible which is exceedingly distasteful to me. If he would kindly defer it till decency no longer compels my presence to interfere with your pleasure, I should be greatly obliged to you all." There was a dead hush. The "person" collapsed, and some one starting a popular song, his discomfiture found no sympathy even from his friends. There were in our team several somewhat feeble-kneed Christians, really good fellows, but fearing to set themselves up as better than others. Years after the incident one of these men told me that the realization of the fellowship proclaimed by this simple protest had meant more to him than any amount of sermons.

A Broad and Deep Reality

This spiritual fellowship is not kindled by peculiarity of garment, by mere conformity to customs, by orthodoxy of, or even our "doxy" of, intellectual tenets. It is far deeper than man can appreciate. It transcends all grades and ranks of mind, body, and estate, so that for myself I have realized more

fully and sweetly the meaning of it away among blue-jersied fishermen on a schooner's deck, or gathered with them under the shadow of our mighty cliffs in Labrador, than I have amidst the most ornate surroundings of the most regardless-of-expense cathedral at the feet of the most irreproachable theology.

It may be we show our love to the Christ but feebly. It may be with weakness of will we follow him afar. It may be that beset with intellectual difficulties our vision of his personality is at times but faint, but the fellowship of those who do not forget him is a forceful fact that brings somehow an inspiration of the reality of the living Christ with surprising clearness, and with unconscious effort, when those who acknowledge him meet together and speak of him and his kingdom. Is this not the real meaning of the Communion sacrament, that meeting thus in fellowship in his name we meet him?

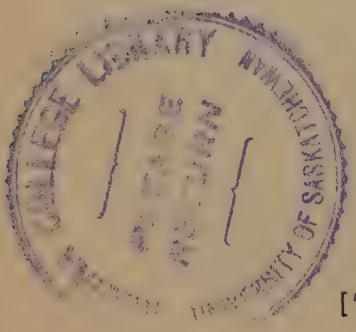
I never forget an experience soon after I entered Oxford. I was sitting in the rooms of the Dean of a certain college,

a clergyman whom I had often seen conducting chapel service. In a lull in the conversation an opportunity came to speak about witnessing for Christ in the college. His reply was, "We don't talk of those extremely personal things." Not as if an *historical* Christ was taboo, but as if all familiarity with a *living* Christ in the world to-day was so most distinctly. The absence of fellowship evidenced by his attitude discounted ever afterwards the help he tried to give me.

The Richest Fellowship of All

Personally I have no more use for a dead Christ than I have for a molten image. The Christ who once did loving deeds and does them no more, who once spoke words of comfort but has been silent for centuries, means nothing to me. A Christ who could heal the sorrows of body and souls once, but whose power has perished thousands of years ago, is no Christ for me. It is the Christ whose fellowship I can share, and whose presence I can realize in the fellowship of those who love him,

that I want, the Christ who in danger says now as once he said, "Fear not, I am with thee," a Christ of whom we can still say, "There stood by me this night one whose I am, and whom I serve," a Christ who, when we have done our best and all that remains is the consciousness of our own impotence, we realize is near us; that is the Christ I want, and that is the Christ my faith to-day acclaims. The "seeing him who is invisible" is the awakening of our soul, the energizing of our efforts, the sustaining of our courage, and that shall one day be the thousandfold reward of our poor service. When we see him as he is, and in complete fellowship shall be made in his likeness.



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